

REMARKS

Claims 1-18 are currently pending. Of these claims, the Office Action indicates that Claims 5, 7, 8, 11, 13-15, 17, and 18 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claims 1, 3, 6, 9, and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Sagastegui et al. (US 5,379,923). Claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 10, and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Maguire (US 6,057,514). Reconsideration of the allowability of the pending claims is respectfully requested in view of the following comments.

1. The Objection to Claims 5, 7, 8.

Claims 5, 7 and 8 have been rewritten in independent form including most all, but not all, of the features of their base claim, Claim 1, and any intervening claims. Applicant submits that these claims are now in condition for allowance.

2. The Rejection of Claims 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12 and 16, and the Objection to Claims 11, 13-15, 17 and 18.

Claims 1 and 16 have been amended to clarify that the sealing device serves both to seal off the hopper during removal of the hopper and to regulate material flow from the hopper when the hopper is positioned to dispense material. Applicant submits that these claims as originally presented incorporated this feature. These claims have also been amended to note that the sealing device comprises a sliding mechanism designed to slide into and out of sealing arrangement with the neck of the hopper. Neither Sagastegui nor Maguire teach or suggest such a sealing device that serves to both seal off the hopper during removal of the hopper and to regulate material flow from the hopper when the hopper is positioned to dispense material.

Claims 2-4 are dependent upon Claim 1 and are believed to be allowable for the same reasons as Claim 1. Claim 6 has been cancelled, and its rejection is therefore moot. Claim 9 has been amended to be dependent upon Claim 7 that has been placed in independent form as mentioned above and is believed to be allowable for the same reasons as Claim 7.

Claim 10 has not been amended. Claim 10 recites that the removable assembly includes a slide gate that serves both to regulate material flow from the hopper and to seal off the hopper during removal. Applicants submit that Claim 10 is, therefore, also allowable. Claims 11-15 are dependent upon Claim 10 and are believed to be allowable for the same reasons as Claim 10.

Claims 17 and 18 are dependent upon Claim 16 and are believed to be allowable for the same reasons as Claim 16. Claim 18 is amended to correct a potential indefiniteness in the claim in regards to the antecedent reference for the hopper.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the rejection of and objection to these claims is now traversed.

3. New Claims 19-26.

New Claims 21, 22 and 23 are Claims 13, 14, and 18 rewritten in independent form including most all, but not all, of the features of their respective base claims and any intervening claims. Applicant submits that these claims are in condition for allowance for the same reasons as Claims 13, 14 and 18 were indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 19 and 20 are Claims 4 and 9 respectively presented with new dependencies.

Claim 24 is directed to a hopper for receiving material and discharging material to an associated machine. Claim 24 is believed to be allowable for the same reasons as Claim 1. Claims 25-26 depend upon Claim 24 and are, likewise, believed to be allowable.

4. Fees

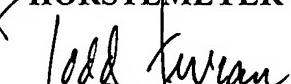
A check in the amount of \$355.00 is included to cover the claims fees for the addition seven (7) independent claims and six (6) total claims over twenty (20). The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees and credit any overpayment of fees to Deposit Account No. 20-0778.

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing amendment and remarks, Applicants submit that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at 770-933-9500 should the Examiner have any questions concerning the amendments and remarks presented herewith.

Respectfully submitted,

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